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Elite Continuity in Ukraine: When Networks Matter (?)

Tetiana Kostiuchenko *

Abstract: »Kontinuität der Elite in der Ukraine: Wenn Netzwerke wirken (?)«.

The first part of the paper contains analysis of elite reproduction/circulation in Ukraine in 2002-2011, taking two political power branches – legislative and executive – at the national level. In the second part of the paper empirical evidence showing connectedness of various elite groups by circulation patterns is presented. The last part of the paper suggests interpretation of the network functioning throughout the aforementioned period due to various subgroups and positions of individuals (i.e. MPs and ministers). The impact of network density and cohesion is evaluated with the legislative initiatives submitted by the elite members.

Keywords: political elites, circulation, network analysis, Ukraine.

Fourteen years after the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine experienced the “Orange Revolution” – a peaceful uprising of the citizenry that began as a protest against electoral fraud in the presidential election, and evolved into a mass expression of discontent with the country’s political leadership. In December 2004 street protests forced the incumbent regime to agree to hold a repeat vote, and in January 2005 Viktor Yushchenko, the opposition candidate, was sworn in as President with a promise to institute sweeping changes in the way the country was governed.

Almost five years after the “orange” events, the pervasiveness of voter disappointment in the perceived lack of change in the country’s development vector seems to suggest that so-called “replacement circulation” (Higley and Pakulski 2000, 113) did not occur within Ukraine’s political elite after 2004. Instead, as it was the case in the years following the collapse of the USSR, current popular opinion in Ukraine suggests that many incumbent actors managed to retain their power positions and statuses.

As discussed in the first part of this paper, in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, elite reproduction was more evident than circulation in Ukraine, as indicated by several studies. In the second part of the paper the empirical evidence showing elite circulation (though not complete replacement) over the post-Soviet period is presented. As discussed in the third section of the paper,

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the ‘staying power’ of particular subsets of Ukraine’s political elite is based on the network connections between and with its members. The analysis of network positions of the interlocking actors is presented in the final part of the paper.

Defining ‘elites’ in the Post-Socialist State

Higher social layers in the post-Socialist states are widely studied through the elite theory paradigm focusing on elite transformations (Burton and Higley 2001, 181-99), elite recruitment (Lane and Ross 1999) and formation of new elite groups (Szabo 2010, 13-40) along with the other elite-related issues. However, it is still an open question what relational structures might evolve between power groups binding elite members and thus enabling patronage to develop. This issue becomes essential to be explored in the societies where interest groups or informality mechanisms might become the basis for the creation of an internally circulating ‘ruling class’.

Following Pareto, the term “political elite” is defined according to positional criteria: individuals who occupy the highest posts within the executive (Cabinet of Ministers and Presidential Administration/Secretariate) and legislative (Members of Parliament) branches of government argued to be the political elite.¹

To measure the degree of circulation/reproduction in Ukraine’s political elite biographies of parliamentary deputies and ministers (available from public sources) are analyzed for this study. This enables obtaining the snapshots of the composition of the political elite during various time periods which can then be compared. However, in addition to providing a measurement of elite circulation/replacement over time, comparing elite member biographies at an individual level (i.e. identifying common experiences of two or more individuals at the same time) allows one to ascertain possible informal linkages between elite members that may not be reflected in official party or faction affiliations.

Elites Through Social Network Analysis (SNA) Perspective

For the recent decades, the concept of social/network capital, advantageous positions and power in networks were developed by various social scientists (Lin 2001, Burt 2005). They have proved that connections between individuals

¹ This definition is an option to define the boundaries of the ‘ruling class’, but it is used in this paper, firstly, because it excludes a normative analysis of whether elite members merit their position, and secondly, because it assumes that real political power is held by those who occupy top positions.

and groups are the basis for the formation of social capital, and therefore the crucial component of successful social activity, and upward mobility in particular.

The wide range of literature on elite affiliations shows that such informal interpersonal connections within economic and political elite circles have attracted both, academic and practical research interest throughout the world. In several studies, Mark Granovetter developed the concept of social embeddedness showing that individuals and groups act in a web of interconnections and mutual commitments and expectations (Granovetter 1985, 481-510); William Domhoff and Michael Useem investigated 'interlocking directorates' in the US corporate community and political sphere developing Charles Wright Mills' idea of the 'ruling circles' (Domhoff 1970, Useem 1983); David Stark and Balasz Vedres applied these approaches to investigate affiliations between business and politics in Hungary during the period of transition (Stark and Vedres 2001).

The key role of informal ties in fostering co-operation between power authorities in new EU member-states – Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria – was studied and compared by Åse Grødeland (2007, 217-52). Appealing to connections remains relatively widespread in the region even after the collapse of the USSR as a resource for recruiting employees, gaining advantageous access to particular positions and earning profits. As argued by Miller and others, it is the common and first-choice practice throughout post-Soviet countries to appeal to connections with government officials or other authorities when solving different issues (Miller et al. 2001). Another study conducted recently by Polese and Rogers, focuses on the informality among small and medium businesses in CEE states showing how the entrepreneurs deal with structural constraints – the taxation, regular audits, fines, contracts, etc. – through the network mechanisms (Polese and Rogers 2011, 612-18).

This kind of informality in *getting things done* is argued to be the reaction to institutional instability providing ways of survival in a society experiencing rapid social, political and economic changes.

Thus, the main research questions of the paper are:

- a. what clusters existed in Ukrainian political elites during the last 10 years, and especially whether the composition of clusters changed after the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2010 respectively;
- b. whether we can trace any evidence of the network capital impact in the 'surviving power' of the elite members;
- c. how the centrality of actors varies among the groups by their surviving power, specifically, whether those who are 'survivors' tend to be more central in the network.

The use of the social network analysis (SNA) approach to the investigating relational structures of political elites is based on several arguments. First, it enables the depiction of status-roles interaction between actors who occupy

governing positions (Knoke 1990). Being related to the studies of communication processes and resource exchange, it includes the analysis of how social capital is accumulated – particularly based on the statement that network interaction assures the stability of the whole social structure (Lin 2001). Finally, the network perspective broadens analyses of inter-individual connections by focusing on interpersonal ties that are flexible, but at the same time not limited to exact groups which brings a dynamic aspect into the analysis (Wellman 1988, 19-61).

Methodology and Data

The empirical stage included mapping of five types of ties (political, business, non-governmental, educational, kinship) between political elite members based on overlapping biographical experiences/common affiliations. Joint legislative initiatives gave the additional verification of the appeal to common experiences among political elite members. They were traced during the interviews and through the open database on the web-page of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine².

The research strategy was the following:

- 1) to compare the composition of political elite (2002-2010);
- 2) to extract the group of ‘survivors’ who managed to stay in power during the last decade;
- 3) to analyze the network ties of ‘survivors’, to check the level of cohesion, centrality of particular actors, etc. – with regard to the potential of this group to stay in power after 2012 elections.

The final dataset contains political actors at highest positions in the executive and legislative power branches. UCINET for Windows was applied for network graphs modeling, for calculating network measures, and for testing network hypotheses.

Circulation of Elites: Empirical Evidence

Analysis of changes in the membership of Ukraine’s political elite over the last 20 years gave more than 25 possible patterns of elite circulation/replacement during six time slots (1990-1994, 1994-1998, 1998-2002, 2002-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2011 which mostly correspond with the parliamentary and presidential elections). For this publication, it was decided to limit the period for the analysis of elite composition and changes to the last decade, specifically from 2002 to 2011. An additional argument for this restriction was that a con-

² The official webpage of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine: <<http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/index>> (accessed on April 24, 2012).

siderable share of elite members who was in power during the 1990s left in 2002 due to various reasons, while ‘newcomers’ might be a group who will play an important role in the political life of Ukraine after the parliamentary elections in 2012. Table 1 below shows the patterns of elite circulation during the 2000s.

Table 1: Patterns of Elite Circulation (2002-2011)

2002-2006, N=508	2006-2007, N=479	2007-2011, N=493	Subgroups by ‘staying power’	2012
136	136	136	“Survivors since 2002”	?
271	--	--	Gone after 2006	
--	160	160	“Survivors since 2006”	
62	62	--	Gone after 2007	
--	121	--	Appeared only in 2006-2007	
39	--	39	“Returners”	
--	--	158	“Newcomers”	

Table 1 shows the changes in the composition of the national elite during the last decade, specifically throughout 2002-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2011. Several groups are defined: *the first group* (136 individuals) – “survivors since 2002” – represents those members of the political elite who managed to stay in power from 2002 till 2011 surviving the events of 2004 and two subsequent parliamentary elections; *the second group* of 271 actors – “gone after 2006” – represents those who were replaced in 2006 (possibly as a result of the Orange Revolution); *the third group* of 62 elite members – “gone after 2007” – stayed in power after 2006, but left in 2007, whereas *the fourth group* (39 actors) – “returners” – represents those who were among the Kuchma-era elite, were replaced during the short 2006-2007 period, and then returned after the pre-term elections in September 2007. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that after the 2004 events and 2006 parliamentary elections, which both were supposed to remove members of the old regime out of power, 198 deputies and ministers (39% of the entire political elite) from the Kuchma era remained on governing positions. However, 271 elite members (about 53%) were replaced with new members as for 2006. The parliamentary elections in 2006 brought 160 new individuals into top-positions, and this group – “Survivors since 2006” – managed to stay in power till 2011. Finally, after the 2007 pre-term elections Ukraine’s political elite was filled up with 158 new members who also remained in power despite presidential elections in 2010.

The analysis of circulation raises the question about *the relational structures of those ‘survivors since 2002’* whose surviving power has allowed them to keep top governing positions for the last decade. Additionally, it is necessary to research into the cohesion within the group of ‘returners’ who managed to come back into power in 2007 after a short break of 1.5 years. These groups,

along with the groups of survivors since 2006 and newcomers in 2007, will be compared for network measures in the next section.

The Elite Network: ‘surviving power’ and ‘group cohesion’

In addition to the analysis of the composition of Ukraine’s political elite after the Orange Revolution, we also compared the individual biographies of the recent political elite aiming to identify possible ties based on common biographical experiences of elite members. Accordingly, individuals who attended the same faculty of the same university during overlapping periods of time; those who were or still are co-owners of the same company; those who were members of the same civic organization, etc. were considered as *connected*. In addition, kinship links and simultaneous employment in the same local government bodies were used to identify additional elements of the elite’s ‘affiliation network’.³

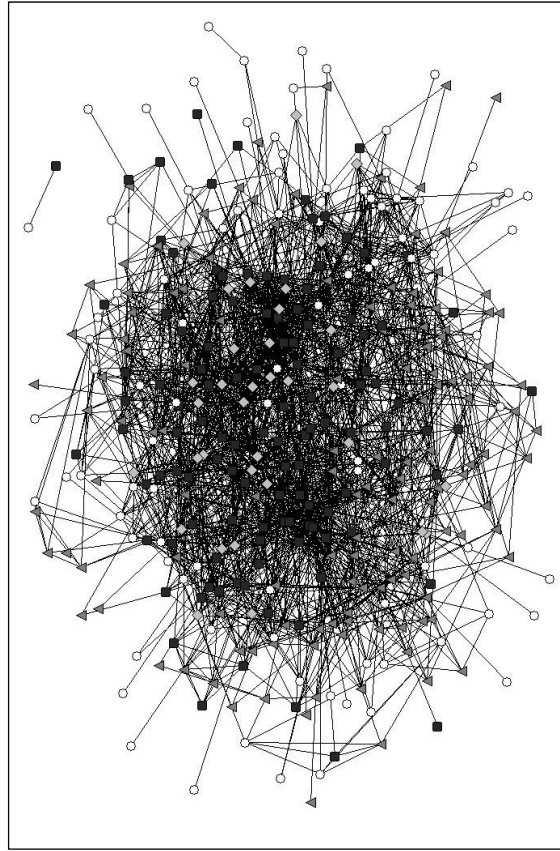
The complete network dataset contains 493 biographies of political elite members including all 450 deputies of the Ukrainian Parliament and the Ministers (members of the Cabinet of Ministers) and high-level functionaries within the Presidential Secretariat. Their biographies were collected from several official sources that were considered reliable: web-pages of state institutions and political parties, periodicals and handbooks such as “Who is who in Ukraine”, and press interviews with them. Five types of ties were distinguished: political, business, civic, kinship, and educational. These ties were arranged into an affiliation network which is visualized along with the ‘staying power’ groups as attributes on Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, the network of political elite members is highly connected, at least in the core of the graph. Besides, black-squared nodes (‘survivors 2002’) are concentrated mostly in the center of the graph, while white circles (‘newcomers’) stay at the periphery. To compare the connectedness of the four groups, we can look on densities.⁴

³ The general approach used in social network analysis focuses on ‘affiliation networks’ – ties between people and institutions that represent so-called corporate interlocks: When people combine several managing positions in different organizations, they maintain a more central and important status position within the network.

⁴ Density of the network of its subgroups shows the share of connections out of all possible ties. It can be reflected in decimals or percentages.

Figure 1: Political Elite Network of 2007-2010 – by Subgroups



Note. Colors refer to the groups of ‘circulation’: black squares – “survivors since 2002”, dark grey triangles – “survivors since 2006”, grey diamonds – “returners”, and white circles – “newcomers”.

Table 2: Density of Groups in Elite Network

Group by Surviving power	N	Density
“Survivors 2002”	136	0.0349
“Survivors 2006”	160	0.0177
“Returners”	39	0.0405
“Newcomers”	158	0.0099

As we see in Table 2, the group of “returners” is the densest subnetwork containing about 4% of all ties that are possible among its nodes. The density of “survivors since 2002” is only slightly lower (3.5%) while the share of connections among “survivors 2006” is twice as low (1.8%). It might be one of the

explanations of how the group managed to stay in power for a decade – its members are closely linked with each other, thus insuring the cohesion and a kind of consensus within this group. Another group – “returners” – is also well connected, which indicates that the actors might have made collective efforts to return into power in 2007. In other words, it is easier to return as a member of a network than as a single player.

Table 3: Degree Centrality vs. “Surviving Power”

Name	Faction	Group by Surviving Power*	NrmDegree**
YanukovychVF	PR	1	3,794
Rybak	PR	1	3,726
Bondarev	BYuT	4	3,455
Hryniv	BYuT	3	3,252
Holovaty	PR	1	3,184
Donchak	BYuT	2	3,117
KliuyevAP	PR	1	2,981
Gudyma	BYuT	3	2,913
Koval	NUNS	1	2,778
Yankovskyi	PR	1	2,778
KyrylenkoVA	NUNS	1	2,642
Konovaliuk	PR	3	2,642
Lavrynovych	PR	1	2,575
Stetskiv	NUNS	3	2,575
Shkiria	PR	1	2,575
KostenkoYul	NUNS	3	2,507
Zayets	NUNS	3	2,439
Skudar	PR	1	2,439
Tarasiuk	NUNS	1	2,439
Zarubinskyi	Blok Lytvyna	3	2,371

*1-‘survivors’ since 2002; 2-‘survivors’ since 2006; 3-‘returners’; 4-‘newcomers’

**Normalized indicators were compared. Normalization of degree centrality and betweenness centrality allows for their comparison as calculated for the same actors. It is simply the percentage equivalent of the centralities.

To check the leadership potential of the elite members within the network and in groups by surviving power, the *centrality measures* were calculated for each actor. This procedure reveals the nodes which are either ‘star-like’ possessing numerous direct connections, or serve as brokers among several network sub-groups. The first approach corresponds with the *degree centrality*, and the second perspective is reflected in *betweenness centrality* (Scott 1991: 83-8). Centralities were calculated for the actors in groups by ‘surviving power’ as specified earlier⁵.

⁵ *Degree centrality* shows how well connected the actors are through their direct ties to the others, and the indicator assists in estimating direct influence of actors; *betweenness centrality* is based on the number of times that a node lies along the shortest path between two

Table 4: Betweenness Centrality vs. “Surviving Power”

Name	Faction	Group by Surviving Power*	NrmBetweenness**
YanukovychVF	PR	1	5,176
Rybak	PR	1	2,266
Donchak	BYuT	2	1,856
TymoshenkoYuV	Former PM	1	1,803
Koval	NUNS	1	1,797
Holovaty	PR	1	1,763
YushchenkoVA	Former President	1	1,583
Shkiria	PR	1	1,466
Akhmetov	PR	2	1,449
Hryniv	BYuT	3	1,418
Kulchynskiy	NUNS	1	1,335
Tretiakov	NUNS	1	1,319
Bilozir	NUNS	1	1,307
Konovaliuk	PR	3	1,287
KliuyevAP	PR	1	1,278
OmelchenkoGO	BYuT	1	1,245
Tarasiuk	NUNS	1	1,215
Khmelnyskyi	PR	1	1,208
Bondarev	BYuT	4	1,194
Stretovych	NUNS	1	1,160

*1-‘survivors’ since 2002; 2-‘survivors’ since 2006; 3-‘returners’; 4-‘newcomers’.

**Normalized indicators were compared. Normalization of degree centrality and betweenness centrality allows for their comparison as calculated for the same actors. It is simply the percentage equivalent of the centralities.

Figures 2-3 contain diagrams which display the variation of the centralities distribution among all actors in the network – between groups by surviving power.

Comparing the distribution of degree centralities in four groups of elite members, we can argue that ‘staying power’ of ‘survivors 2002’ is to some extent assured by their high degree centralities. The values for all actors in this group are higher than for the actors in two other groups – “survivors 2006” and “newcomers”. Relatively high degree centralities of the “returners” also might assisted them to come back in 2007. This finding corresponds with the densities of these four subnetworks.

The variation of betweenness centralities (Figure 3) in four groups by surviving power shows that there are few leading actors who attract most of the structural power in the network. Although these leaders can be located in every groups – either among “survivors 2002” or among “newcomers” –, the highest betweenness centrality is held by the single actor in the first group.

others and shows gate-keeping position along with the opportunities to control the flow of resources, i.e. the exchange of information.

Figure 2: Normalized Degree Centralities Distribution in Four Groups

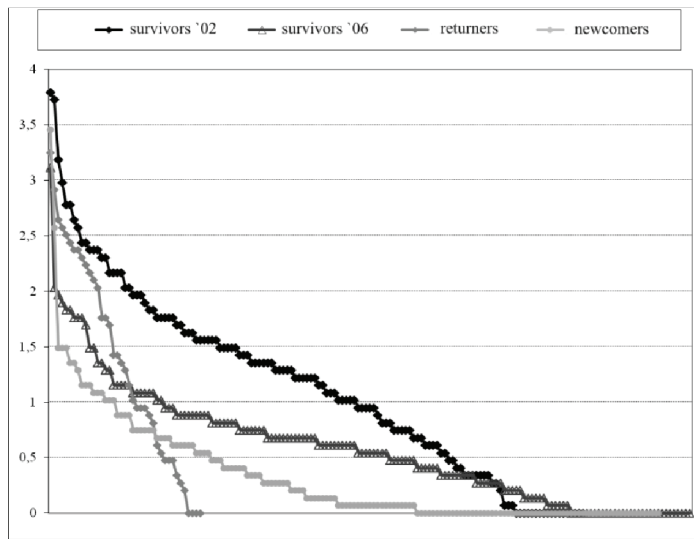
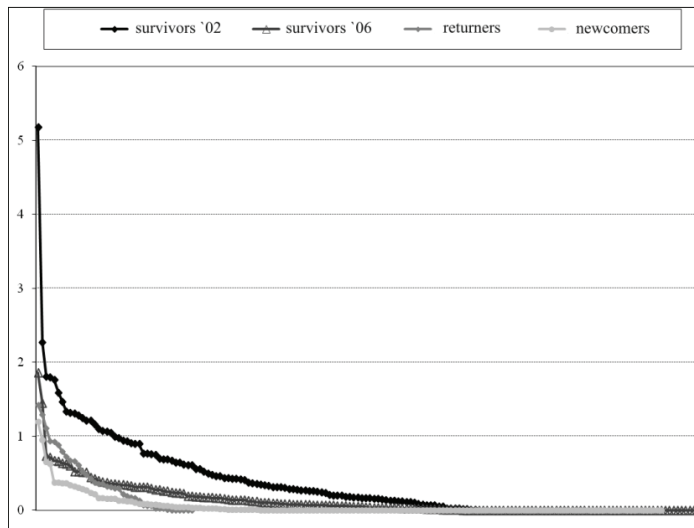


Figure 3: Normalized Betweenness Centralities Distribution in Four Groups



To conclude, the comparison of network actors by normalized centralities revealed key actors according to both approaches, direct influence and brokerage power. A smoother distribution for degree centrality indices indicates that a

relatively high number of all elite members maintain many connections with their surrounding. However, a more rapid decline in the rankings by betweenness centrality indices proves that only few actors can really benefit from their bridging positions between highly connected subgroups. Moreover, the top-20 of centrality rankings, by degree *and* betweenness, contains several similar actors – who therefore hold beneficial positions from both perspectives of interpretation, centrality and power in the network.

Conclusion

The replacement of the elites, as a result of the ‘Orange Revolution’ in 2004 or after the parliamentary elections in 2006, was only partial because a particular group of elite members of the Kuchma period remained in power. To summarize the empirical results of the changes in elite composition, the political elite composition changed in 2006 as follows:

- 271 actors (over 50%) gone after 2006;
- about 27% of all elite members (136 individuals) managed to remain in power throughout the last decade, since 2002;
- 121 new members came into power exclusively for 2006 and left in 2007 (about 25% of the total composition of elite);
- another 160 actors came in 2006 and stayed till 2011 (over 25%);
- a tiny group of 39 actors (less than 10%) left governing positions in 2006, but managed to return in 2007.

The group of ‘survivors since 2002’ is better connected than ‘newcomers’, its members are rather central players within the whole network. Before the 2012 parliamentary elections, the distribution of groups by their “surviving power” is as follows:

- ‘survivors’ since 2002 = 28% (highly dense)
- ‘survivors’ since 2006 = 32% (more fragmented)
- ‘returners’ = 8% (highly dense)
- ‘new-comers’ = 32% (lowest density)

A rather intuitive finding is that ties between the elite members matter during radical changes of political regime because those who obtained positions in governing institutions tend to come at least in pairs (dyads) or as a network. ‘Survivors since 2002’ rather serve as ‘brokers’ – they have higher betweenness centrality scores; however, they are present among TOP-20 actors in terms of degree centrality as well. Actors of other groups (‘survivors’ since 2006, ‘returners’ and ‘new-comers’) eventually appeared among TOP-20 by betweenness and degree centrality, but there were the same persons, so we can assume that combinations of the influence strategies are necessary to access power and to be included in the network. Another option is to replace one

network with the other, though this way of elite circulation might be rather challenging due to the high cohesion between the current elite members.

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